
The Defense Institute of International Legal Studies Sends a Mobile Education Team to Sierra Leone

By

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The Republic of Sierra Leone currently faces tremendous rebuilding and reconciliation challenges after more than ten years of bloody civil strife. Given present plans for drawing down what is still the world's largest United Nations (U.N.) peacekeeping mission, the future stability of the country rests on civilian and military leaders' ability to reestablish mutual trust. This process will not take place overnight, and cannot proceed in a vacuum. In Sierra Leone it is respect for the rule of law alone that can provide credible structure and substance to this tenuous rebuilding process. It is for this reason that U.S. Ambassador Peter Chaveas and Defense Attaché Lieutenant Colonel William Godbout, USA, requested that the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies (DIILS) perform an assessment and follow-on training designed not only to inform, but also to provide a rare and timely forum for the breaking of barriers between civilian and military sectors. Security assistance in this case would take the shape of educating civilians and military together about civil military relations and disciplined military operations under the rule of law. These efforts, in concert with the establishment of Sierra Leone's hybrid Special Court, will reestablish a context of accountability, respect for the rule of law, and respect for human rights upon which Sierra Leone can reconcile its past and build for the future.

During an assessment visit in March of 2002, DIILS helped the U.S. Embassy formulate an action plan, which included two legal training evolutions in Sierra Leone during 2003. The first evolution was designed as a seminar focusing on joint training for Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and civilian leaders on the role of the military in a democracy, including civilian control of the military, military justice, and domestic operations. The second training evolution was a customized train the trainer package focusing on training junior military officers from units around Sierra Leone as instructors in Disciplined Military Operations and Law of Armed Conflict. This two-step plan ensured that information was understood at high levels and then effectively disseminated throughout the country.

Both training evolutions took place as scheduled during 24-28 February and 3-5 March of 2003. All training was organized with the help of the British members of the RSLAF Joint Command and Sierra Leone's Ministry of Defense, in coordination with the U.S. Embassy. The first week the DIILS team was led by Brigadier General Richard O'Meara, USA(ret.), and included Colonel Richard A.B. Price, USAF (DIILS director), Lieutenant Colonel Steven A. Folsom, USMC, and Captain Felipe Pérez, USMC. The seminar was entitled "Legal Aspects of the Military in a 21st Century Society," and was graciously opened by the Vice President of Sierra Leone, the Honorable Solomon Berewa. Members of the official party also included the Director General of the Ministry of Defense, the RSLAF Chief of Defense Staff, and Ambassador Chaveas, who participated throughout the week of training. Attendees included parliamentarians (including a former Ambassador to the U.N. and U.S), four general officers, other senior military officers including British military members of the RSLAF, members of non-government organizations, representatives of the Sierra Leone Bar Association, and individuals from the offices of the Ministry of Defense, the Director-General, the Solicitor General, and the National Security Advisor.

A special highlight ensuring utmost relevancy for the week's training was the arrangement for Mr. David Crane, the Special Prosecutor for the Special Court of Sierra Leone to take part as a guest speaker. This was the Special Prosecutor's first opportunity to speak to an assembled group comprised of senior military officers and senior civilian officials. The opportunity was taken to

answer questions and clarify the U.N.'s mandate to help Sierra Leone prosecute the most serious war criminals from the recent conflict.

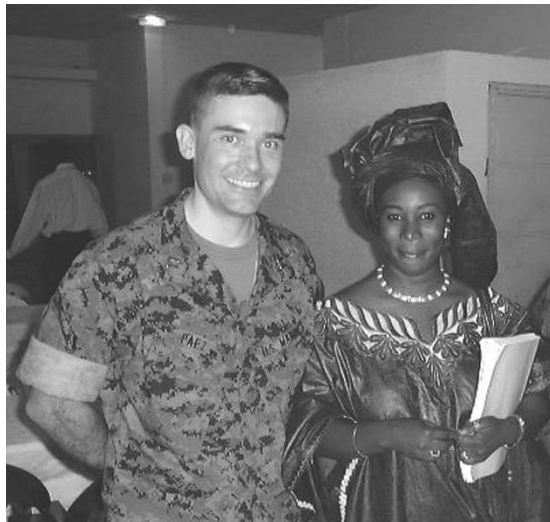


The appearance of the Special Prosecutor at the DIILS seminar made headlines around the country.



U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone, the Honorable Peter Chaveas, presents DIILS plaque to Mr. K.O. Bah, Director General of the Ministry of Defense.

After the departure of Brigadier General O'Meara and Colonel Price, Lieutenant Colonel Folsom and Captain Páez were joined by Major George Cadwalader, USMC, senior instructor at the U.S. Naval Justice School. The second week of Train the Trainer in Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) instruction then took place under simulated field conditions at Cockerill Barracks in Freetown. Participants ranged from Warrant Officers to Majors, and came from units across Sierra Leone. The DIILS team utilized military mission briefing techniques familiar to all participants in an effort to incorporate LOAC training into every day training for future students. Techniques utilized included flip chart briefing, terrain model briefing, and most effectively, lane role-play training. The lane training proved to be the most useful in involving participants and was clearly the most appropriate for future use by the student instructors considering the high illiteracy rate within the RSLAF.



DIILS team members with participants of the “Legal Aspects of the Military in a 21st Century Society” seminar.



The first week DIILS team was also extremely fortunate in receiving a tour of the active construction site for the Special Court of Sierra Leone hosted by Mr. Bob Parnell (Colonel, USMC, retired).



In post-training meetings with Sierra Leonean participants, senior officers, and government officials, the DIILS team was informed that these training evolutions could not have come at a more appropriate time for the country. In their view, the seminar and discussion between high-level representatives of civilian and military sectors formed vital building blocks for future democratic stability. Furthermore, civilian officials were particularly pleased to see the projection of their national principles of respect for human rights, civilian control of the military, and disciplined operations under the rule of law taken beyond the seminar hall and into the hands of future military instructors. These leaders are convinced that the ability of these DIILS trained officers to pass such principles to the individual soldier is the most effective way of preventing future transgressions of democratic rule. The U.S. Embassy expressed thanks for the role DIILS played in its overall engagement plan as it continues to help Sierra Leone face the challenge of rebuilding the function and reputation of its professional military. These two successful weeks of

training demonstrated DIILS' value to the security assistance community, and its ability to carry out relevant, focused training anywhere in the world.



Major Cadwalader, Lieutenant Colonel Folsome, Captain Páez at Cockerill Barracks.

About the Author

Captain Felipe Páez, USMC, reported to the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies in January 2002 as a Country Program Manager responsible for 27 countries. Captain Páez has been awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal and the Meritorious Unit Commendation Ribbon. Captain Páez, a native of Bogotá, Colombia, is a 1992 graduate of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, with a Bachelor of Science in Biology. After graduation he worked as at the United Nations Development Programme until he began his legal studies toward the latter part of 1993. In 1996 he received his Juris Doctorate from Pace University School in White Plains, New York. Prior to graduating from law school, Captain Páez worked at the New York State Bureau of Environmental Enforcement where he helped prosecute violators of the State's environmental regulations. Captain Páez authored Environmental Framework Laws in Latin America, 13 Pace Env'tl. L. Rev. 625 (1996). He is a member of the Bar of the State of Maryland. Captain Páez completed Officer Candidate School and was commissioned in December of 1997.